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SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE SECOND
SESSION OF THE 21ST LEGISLATURE OF
THE PROVINCE OF ALBERTA ON
THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 1987.



THE HONOURABLE W. HELEN HUNLEY
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR, PROVINCE OF ALBERTA

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly:

I have the honour to welcome you to the Second Session of the Twenty-first Legislature of the Province of Alberta.

During this Session, my government will bring forward legislative and budgetary priorities that will be an agenda for action in employment, education and for our key industries of agriculture and energy. Proposals to vigorously promote and continue the diversification of the Alberta economy will also be presented.

1986 was a difficult year for many Alberta families. My government is concerned about the hardship created by unemployment and weakened business conditions especially in energy, agriculture and construction. To protect Albertans, assistance was provided by my government's broad range of programs for agriculture, energy and small business. These initiatives included the Farm Credit Stability Program, comprehensive energy industry incentives and royalty reductions, and the Small Business Term Assistance Plan.

1986 also saw government revenues decline and produce a large budget deficit, a direct result of the sudden drop in international oil prices. A budgetary deficit can be justified in the short term to protect Albertans but, as in our homes and businesses, deficits cannot be allowed to continue. My government will outline plans in the budget to balance the province's finances in an orderly way over the next several years. In this process, Alberta's leading programs in health care, services for seniors, education and social policy will not be placed at risk. Alberta has a long tradition of prudent financial management and, working together, Albertans will continue to benefit from my government's firm commitment to these important policy areas.

My government encourages all Albertans to join in a co-operative spirit to meet the challenge of our new fiscal realities.

At the same time, these new realities can bring out the best in Albertans, as together we seek new answers and new innovations, to assure the greatness we know Alberta can achieve.

EMPLOYMENT

My government will continue its priority commitment to job creation and training by providing major funding to employment and training programs.

In anticipation of a strengthening economy, the Labour Market Strategy will provide work experience, retraining opportunities, and on-the-job training initiatives that encourage employers to improve the skills of their staff. Other initiatives to be undertaken as part of the Labour Market Strategy will include support for entrepreneurial activities, training and retraining programs for journeymen, programs directed at special needs groups such as social allowance recipients, support for Youth Employment Centres, establishment of a Women's Career Resource Centre and addressing employment equity issues in apprenticeship and non-traditional occupations. My government will undertake a public review to determine how the apprenticeship system and its legislative framework can be further improved.

The Labour Market Strategy will support the province's economic diversification efforts through assistance to Alberta businesses with training and employment programs. The Strategy's short-term goal will be to address cyclical unemployment through the use of wage subsidies. Its major longer term emphasis will be to support stable economic growth and address the impact of changes in Alberta's economy by providing training incentives and support for the private sector.

AGRICULTURE

My government will continue to strongly support its priority for agriculture in Alberta.

In 1986, total realized net income of Alberta farmers and ranchers increased to \$713 million. This increase is attributable to lower operating expenses, somewhat lower depreciation charges, a healthier livestock sector and substantial government program payments.

\$2 billion in long term, fixed rate financing at 9% was made available to farmers through the Farm Credit Stability Program, fulfilling a major commitment of my government. To date there have been over 13,000 participants who have taken up \$1.5 billion in fixed rate financing.

Legislation will be introduced to establish the Agricultural Research Institute, a body designed to co-ordinate and develop priorities for the research necessary to maintain our industry at the leading edge of technology and productivity. The Farming for the Future Program continues as a key element in the overall approach to agricultural research.

Changes in the Alberta Hail and Crop Insurance Program will be initiated as a result of a comprehensive review recently completed. Also, the delivery of farm credit programs will be improved as a result of the recommendations of the Alberta Agricultural Development Corporation review committee. Valuable input from Alberta's farmers and ranchers is the foundation for these changes.

A number of special programs will continue in 1987, including the Farm Fuel Rebate Program and the Fertilizer Price Protection Program. The Feed Grain Market Adjustment Program will be renamed the Alberta Crow Benefit Offset Program to more properly reflect its purpose and intent.

My government will play a major role in presenting Alberta's position on agriculture in the bi-lateral and multi-lateral trade negotiations. My Ministers of Agriculture and Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs will continue to work aggressively to ensure that the concerns of Alberta agricultural producers are well served and at the forefront of these negotiations.

ENERGY

International crude oil prices have recently recovered to the \$16 U.S. per barrel range, improving the outlook of the oil and gas industry in Alberta. As the industry gains confidence in the stability of the new price level, investment in the conventional industry will increase. The combination of fiscal changes my government has made, the reduction in finding and drilling

costs, and higher prices, make exploration and development in Alberta more attractive than anywhere in North America.

My government recognizes that the conventional industry alone will not generate sufficient new oil reserves to prevent Canada from becoming dependent on foreign supplies in the 1990s. Positive measures are required to encourage the development of major new oil projects. There is a role for governments, which can take a long term perspective on the industry, to expedite such projects so that their production will be available when needed. Now is the time to plan and develop those major projects and my government invites all those who have interests in potential oil sands and heavy oil projects to bring specific proposals forward for consideration. Alberta resources can provide the domestic crude oil supplies to meet future Canadian requirements.

To encourage continued development of Alberta's natural gas reserves, my government will continue to monitor the progress of gas deregulation to ensure that the market operates fairly and that the Alberta gas industry has access to markets.

EDUCATION AND ADVANCED EDUCATION

My government will recommend to the Assembly new legislation that will provide a solid framework for the future of education in Alberta. The new School Act will be the culmination of extensive consultation with Albertans and reflects the many opinions and views expressed from all parts of the province.

While recognizing the need for fiscal restraint, every effort will be made to assist school boards to maintain the excellent quality of education that Alberta students currently enjoy.

The Advanced Education Endowment and Incentive Fund, announced in the 1986 Throne Speech, is off to a very successful start. To date, over \$20 million has been pledged by individuals and private businesses to form endowments and to support operating and capital projects. This Fund encourages community support for Alberta's public post-secondary education institutions.

Building will continue for the future. Two capital projects will proceed this year funded in part by the Endowment Fund. They are the Jeanne and Peter Loughheed building at Banff Centre and the Recreation Building at the Vermilion Campus of Lakeland College.

Construction will commence on the Lloydminster Campus of Lakeland College, on Phase Two of the Grande Prairie College, on a new Slave Lake Community Vocational Centre and on major renovations to Corbett Hall at the University of Alberta.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TRADE

My government's priorities in the economic development area will emphasize small business, trade and diversification. Strong service and manufacturing sectors related to tourism, new technology and engineering will be encouraged.

In 1986, the Alberta Small Business Term Assistance Plan offered eligible small businesses term loans up to a maximum of \$150,000 at a fixed rate of 9%. The plan was so well received by the small business community that the original \$750 million funding was increased to over \$1 billion.

In this unique way, my government provided the stimulus necessary for small businesses in the province to achieve financial stability and realize their growth potential.

The Alberta Small Business Equity Corporations Program received additional funding of \$9 million in 1986 which has led to the commitment of \$30 million of private sector capital in the coming years.

Exciting new opportunities in service industries, the film industry, food processing, forest products, the aerospace industry, advanced materials and plastics, electronics, chemicals and industrial/commercial and consumer products will provide more jobs and growth in Alberta.

Using new innovative ideas, the Alberta Opportunity Company will provide patient capital, inventory financing for retailers, and special consideration for recent university graduates and prospective entrepreneurs.

A major emphasis will be placed on introducing increased numbers of Alberta businesses to the export markets of the world. This will not only help to sustain existing employment levels in traditional industries, but will also create new jobs and diversify Alberta's economic base. For each additional \$1 billion of export sales, 15,000 to 20,000 new jobs are created.

DIVERSIFICATION

My government's drive toward economic diversification through advanced technologies will continue and expand. Albertans are broadening our economy and in the process are creating new, high quality job opportunities, and assisting in maintaining present technological leadership in basic industries. The highly successful joint venture program of the Alberta Research Council in co-operation with private sector companies will continue to offer Alberta companies outstanding resources in basic and applied research.

Strong emphasis will continue to be placed on assisting entrepreneurs and small companies in Alberta to bring their inventive ideas to the market place. An important element of this emphasis is achieved by co-operation between government, universities and industry.

In the past year, facilities of the Alberta Microelectronic Centre were opened in Edmonton and Calgary, and the Electronic Industry Information System was launched. In addition, the Alberta Telecommunications Research Centre was expanded, new quarters for Alberta Research Council were officially opened, and equipment was installed at the Alberta Laser Institute.

Our universities, colleges and technical institutes continue their commitment to excellence in research, teaching and community services; training Albertans who can compete internationally in new technologies, science, innovation, entrepreneurship, tourism and business administration.

Development and diversification of Alberta's forest resources, and other renewable resources, continues to remain a high priority of my government.

in order to provide long term, meaningful jobs for Albertans. Several capital projects involving new forestry manufacturing facilities were completed in 1986 while others were started and are currently under way. Construction of Canada's first chemi-thermo-mechanical pulp mill using hard wood has begun in Whitecourt, and will provide employment for 365 people. The new oriented strand board plant at Drayton Valley producing an Alberta developed product will employ 350 people in mill and harvest operations. Construction of a major sawmill, also at Drayton Valley, will employ 100 people. Canada's first medium density fibreboard plant at Blue Ridge started production in 1986, creating 65 new permanent jobs. Additions to the Grande Prairie and Hinton bleached craft pulp mills are currently in the planning stage.

TOURISM

Increased growth in the tourism industry means employment opportunities, commercial stability and economic diversification. My government recognizes the vitality and potential of tourism and will continue its commitment to making Alberta a four-season, world travel destination.

Vigorous and effective marketing initiatives in 1987 will draw visitors to exciting new facilities and attractions. Many existing facilities will be upgraded.

Career opportunities will continue to be a high priority. To encourage the development of a skilled and motivated work force, my government will establish the Alberta Tourism Education Council as a joint venture with the private sector. The Council will be chaired by a Member of the Legislative Assembly and will include representation from the tourism industry, educational institutions, and the Departments of Tourism, Advanced Education and Career Development and Employment.

LABOUR

The broadly based Labour Legislation Review Committee representing unionized employees, management and the general public released its final report on February 17, 1987.

My government will introduce a new Labour Code which will place Alberta at the forefront of labour legislation across Canada. The Code will serve as the basis for a fair and equitable relationship between all employees and their employers recognizing their commonality of interest. It will also provide the framework for the stable labour relations climate essential to encourage the investments for the diversification and continued growth of the Alberta economy into the 21st century.

Consultation with the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees has led to the establishment of the Employee Flexibility Assistance Program to minimize difficulties for individual employees affected by the downsizing of the public service. The features of this program are the Early Retirement Incentive Program, the Counselling Services Program and the Employment Options Program. My government's commitment is to a fair and co-operative relationship with our public servants.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

My government will propose a wide-ranging review of the hospital system in the province leading to appropriate changes in government policy which will give hospital boards greater flexibility and control over their operations.

The review will include an inventory of the number and types of beds in our hospital system. The conversion of some active treatment beds to needed auxiliary care beds, particularly in rural Alberta, will help to meet the needs of our senior citizens.

The ambulance system in the province will be thoroughly examined by a Minister's Advisory Committee and recommendations will be made for suggested changes.

New initiatives will be introduced to encourage greater awareness of the costs of our health care system and the responsibility of each Albertan to ensure that the system is used effectively and that we continue to enjoy one of the best health care systems in North America.

A new Mental Health Act will be introduced during this Session of the Legislature. The proposed Bill will emphasize the rights of patients.

My government will recommend new programs in children's mental health. The public and organizations most involved in issues affecting children and families will be consulted. The Provincial Mental Health Advisory Council and the Regional Mental Health Councils have been given the responsibility for co-ordinating this initiative.

My government's strong public health immunization program will be expanded with the introduction of a new vaccine to protect our children against Haemophilus Influenza B, a disease which causes meningitis and other serious infections. The new vaccine will be administered to two year olds throughout the province by the twenty-seven local health units.

The need for more information to protect workers from the harmful effects of chemicals in the workplace is a concern of my government. A consensus has been reached among the federal, provincial and territorial governments which will lead to the implementation of a nation wide Workplace Hazardous Materials Information system within the next two years.

Safety in the drilling and well servicing sectors of the industry is another priority of my government. This commitment to the safety of workers in the oil and gas industry is being fulfilled in the construction of a world class petroleum industry training centre this year.

As a caring society, Albertans recognize that there are fellow citizens who, through no fault of their own, as a result of disability or financial adversity, find themselves in need of assistance. My government continues to have a strong commitment to people in need.

My government is also committed to the family as the social strength of our communities, and recognizes the ability of individual Albertans to take responsibility for their own lives. New ways will be sought to ensure government social support programs encourage individual initiative and strong family units.

Albertans and my government are strongly supporting the Rick Hansen "Man in Motion" campaign and all Canadians are proud of his original way of creating the awareness in people all over the world of the needs of the disabled.

NATIVE AFFAIRS

My government places a high priority on the transfer of Metis Settlement lands to the Metis people of the province. Through consultation, much progress has been made toward the adoption of new legislation to replace the present Metis Betterment Act.

My government, in co-operation with the federal government, will be proceeding to take steps to implement the agreement recently signed with the Cree Indian Band at Fort Chipewyan, settling the largest outstanding Treaty land entitlement in the Province.

Initiatives will be taken to assure that any native community that has the desire to establish full service policing, is provided the opportunity to achieve this objective.

My government, in co-operation with the Metis Association of Alberta, has begun an experimental program of regional funding of programs intended to promote employment, education and training among Metis in all areas of Alberta.

My government will also proceed this year with new agreements which will ensure Indian bands have responsibility for the provision of Child Welfare services to their members.

ATTORNEY GENERAL AND SOLICITOR GENERAL

A proposed community based policing policy will encourage local communities across the province to have citizens become more involved in preventative policing as a means of assisting the police in crime prevention, detection and control. Recent initiatives to detect, apprehend and prosecute persons who continue to drive while suspended will be intensified.

My government will form a Joint Government/Industry Task Force on Builders' Liens. This Task Force will be made up of representatives of the construction industry, government, the financial community and the energy sector.

The Impaired Driving Countermeasures Co-ordinating Committee under the leadership of the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, will be increasing its efforts to ensure co-operation between the private and public sectors to develop effective new programs to attack this serious social problem.

My government is actively pursuing a decentralized service delivery system for young offenders to ensure that those young people in conflict with the law continue to maintain contact with their home community and family members while in custody.

TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES

My government will maintain a policy of leadership in the development of highways throughout the province. The twinning of Highways 1 and 16 will be continued on the present schedule. Along with the many projects to maintain our highway system province wide, the widening of Highway 63 to Fort McMurray will remain a high priority.

My government will continue to support the orderly development of utility services, and reasonably priced and reliable services for Alberta consumers. Methods will be explored to facilitate electricity generation with non-utility owned small power generators as long as the price of electricity is not increased unduly for consumers.

Based on extensive consultation with Albertans through their elected representatives, my government will introduce legislation requiring the use of seatbelts in automobiles in a further effort to reduce the number of people injured in automobile accidents.

Alberta's agricultural sector will continue to benefit from the government's support of the Rural Electrification, Rural Gas, and Farm Water programs. These continuing initiatives reduce utility installation costs for Albertans and respond to agriculture's changing needs for upgraded utility services. The loan program is being extended to assist Rural Electrification Associations with rebuilding aged sections of their distribution systems.

CULTURE AND MULTICULTURALISM

My government's commitment to the enrichment and sharing of our multicultural heritage will be further emphasized by the establishment of the Department of Culture and Multiculturalism. Alberta is the first of the provinces to take such a step. Other initiatives underlining my government's commitment to that heritage will also be announced.

Plans are nearing completion for the opening of the new World Heritage Site, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre, 12 miles west of Fort Macleod. This facility depicts the history and development of the Plains Indians from 6,000 years ago. The site is of such a scale and nature that it will become recognized as an important provincial cultural and tourist attraction.

A new field station in Dinosaur Provincial Park, the Tyrrell Museum satellite, will open in May and will provide a significant visitor attraction in southeastern Alberta. The new facility will also increase tourist visits to Dinosaur Provincial Park and will support the Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology in Drumheller.

Planning for both the Reynolds-Alberta Museum at Wetaskiwin and the Remington Carriage Collection Interpretive Centre at Cardston will be initiated this year and will support the outstanding work contributed by the citizens of these communities.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

In keeping with my government's commitment to economic equality for women, new initiatives were announced at the First Ministers' Conference in November 1986. My government will improve education and training opportunities for women by increasing awareness about the changing roles of women in our society, and removing obstacles which prevent women from enjoying a wider range of career alternatives.

New initiatives to encourage young women to consider careers in non-traditional occupations will be developed. These include mentor programs and special initiatives based in public schools and at the post-secondary level.

The Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues is now established and meeting regularly. The Council will be instrumental in bringing the ideas and concerns of women to the attention of government.

ENVIRONMENT

My government recognizes the importance of ensuring that Alberta remains as Canada's environmental leader.

Alberta was the first jurisdiction in Canada to create a Department of the Environment and my government will continue its determination to achieve the protection, improvement and wise use of our environment now and in the future. Our quality of life is dependent on the environmental quality of our water and air.

With the opening of the Special Wastes Management Treatment Facility near Swan Hills, Alberta will become the only jurisdiction in Canada with a fully integrated special wastes treatment facility. My government will strengthen its commitment to safe and efficient waste management practices by improving the Waste Management Assistance Program, and will continue the Help End Landfill Pollution Program. Alberta will continue to move forward by sponsoring important environmental research under the Acid Deposition Research Program and my government looks forward to receiving a major report on recycling that is being prepared by the Environment Council of Alberta.

The record of commitment by my government to pollution abatement and waste management will continue to be second to none.

WILDLIFE

Alberta was the first province to support the designation of 1987 as Wildlife '87, to honour the 100th Anniversary of Canada's first wildlife sanctuary. This will be a year to celebrate, and expand on our achievements for wildlife. Currently, my government is working with volunteers, private companies and local governments in planning and implementing wildlife projects in their respective areas. Public awareness programs, sponsorship of habitat projects, maintenance of natural areas, bird feeder programs, educational promotion and other similar projects to promote the value of wildlife to our citizens, will be undertaken. Albertans are encouraged to become involved with Wildlife '87.

CONSUMER AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS

My government will pursue its policy of facilitating marketplace activity while minimizing government intervention. Emphasis will be placed on individual standards of practice and unnecessary regulatory burdens will be reduced. Business licenses will be converted to five-year terms from the present annual or bi-annual renewal requirement. Licensing of insurance agents, brokers and adjusters and of real estate agents will be transferred to the respective industries. Reporting requirements for volunteer and other non-profit associations will be eased by new legislation.

Legislation will be introduced to enable implementation of an insurance industry compensation plan which will support policyholders if their insurance company becomes insolvent.

HOUSING

1987 has been chosen by the United Nations as the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

Two Alberta housing initiatives, the Rural Home Assistance Program and the Operation Friendship Project in Edmonton will be officially designated by the United Nations, and the project descriptions will be prepared for international distribution. My government will provide support for six projects containing 154 units of special purpose housing. This unique housing provides on-site care, service and facilities for residents with physical, social and emotional conditions or disabilities.

1988 OLYMPICS

Next February, Albertans will host the world as athletes and spectators come together to celebrate the fifteenth Olympic Winter Games. All Albertans will share in the pride of accomplishment in the Games.

Alberta has developed important facilities which will provide a lasting legacy to develop athletes and provide training, competition and recreational opportunities in world-class facilities.

Last December, the provincially-funded Canmore Nordic Centre and the Nakiska ski complex were opened and very successful international competitions have since been held at each site. Work is progressing well on the expansion of McMahon Stadium, site of the opening and closing ceremonies, and the Athletes' Village at the University of Calgary.

My government congratulates the Games' organizers for the significant progress to date and recognizes the vital role being played by thousands of volunteers in making this world-class event an unqualified success.

NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

The Canada/Alberta Northern Development Agreement will enter its second year of offering special economic and employment development assistance to northern businesses and communities. In 1986/87 over 150 applications were processed.

The Council will sponsor a major conference on water management in Grande Prairie this Fall, continuing the Council's policy of seeking public participation and input.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

A new Credit Union Act will be recommended to the Assembly. It will provide a framework for the continued recovery of the Credit Union system in Alberta by allowing competitive financial services for credit union members within financially prudent guidelines. My government has undertaken measures to ensure that the Credit Union Stabilization Corporation can meet its role as guarantor of deposits. The budget will reflect the assistance being provided by the Province to remove the foreclosed real estate from credit unions in difficulty and to provide financing assistance for the deficits incurred by individual credit unions. These measures will enable credit unions with viable business plans to return to profitability and emphasizes once again my government's assistance to over 470,000 Albertans who are depositors in approximately 250 branches in Alberta.

FEDERAL AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

In Canada's federal system, the promotion of a vital national economy requires the support and co-operation of all governments. The policies and programs of the federal government in areas such as international trade, tax reform, agriculture, and regional economic development will have a significant impact upon the social and economic vitality of the province. My government is determined that Alberta receive its full share of the benefits of Confederation.

Alberta will participate actively in all discussions with other governments aimed at reforming the Constitution and will urge the Federal government and other provinces to undertake discussions leading to a reformed and effective Senate.

Alberta will continue to expand its trade horizons. My government will stress the importance of continuing the First Ministers' agreement on full provincial participation in the trade negotiations. This will ensure Alberta's interests are recognized and achieved in the Canada-United States trade talks, as well as in the Multilateral Trade Negotiations which are now underway under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

These international trade negotiations are of major importance to the continued and future economic well-being of Alberta, particularly during this time of increasing protectionist pressures in the world. My government will vigorously support the efforts of the Alberta private sector to create jobs in expanded export markets and to protect the jobs dependent upon our current exports.

As a result of consultation with the Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, a proposal will be considered to provide for greater equity in the property taxation system in rural Alberta.

My government will continue to stress the tremendous potential of our Province. Albertans are strong, proud and resourceful. Building together on

a foundation of healthy families and communities, we will strive for the promising future that will be ours.

Members of the Legislative Assembly: in due course you will be presented with the budget estimates. You will be asked to grant the necessary funds for the operating services and expenditures authorized by the Legislature and to endorse a program of capital financing for the Government of Alberta.

I leave you now to the business of the Session, with full confidence that, as elected representatives, your debates and your votes will reflect your understanding of the public interests of all people of Alberta.

I pray for your wisdom and strength in your deliberations.